NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

FRIENDS OF THE UNION, TO THE RESCUE!

It is with something more than incredulity that the great mass of citizens of the United States hear the report of grave apprehensions of DISUNION, which has begun to reach them from Washington. The rumor is received with an abhorrence that deprives it of all credit. Many regard it as an improbable treason—improbable, because they can see no commensurate cause to produce it. Many regard it with ridicule, as the fancy of phrenzied minds heated to an unwholesome temperature by too much pondering over imaginary griefs. Many look upon it as a toy of politicians, an artful working-up and exaggeration of specious circumstances into a pretext for agitation, and employed to alarm the public mind for some political end very wide of disunion or other irreparable mischief. Others believe that it is nothing more than one of those periodical orgasms which, from their frequency, they have learned to reckon upon as a peculiarity of our system of government.

This reluctance to believe that which it would be rank treason to contrive, is the index to a sound and healthful state of public opinion. Both North and South give evidence of this incredulity. The people cannot believe in the probability of danger to the Union—and especially just now. There are so many signs of the existence of an unprecedented national prosperity around them; every man pursuing his own thrift with unusual activity; every mind engrossed with such an extraordinary fulness both of private and public affairs, that they cannot understand what motive any one could find to break up the fabric upon which all this profitable energy depends. The Panama Railroad, the Nicaragua Canal, the great overland track between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the marvels of California, the new Territories, the ocean-steamers, the adjustment of commerce and navigation to the new polity of England, the wonderful growth of cities, the telegraph, and the iron roads that, in the lines of a great multiplication table, are overlaying the States, and welding and riveting them together by inseverable bonds—all these objects and undertakings are just now soliciting and absorbing the attention of the country. Never before has the public mind been filled with a tithe of the magnificent conceptions which now engross it. Never before has the Union been so *visibly indispensable* to the nation. Fable cannot exaggerate the features which give to this era and generation a Titanic aspect, and render them the most remarkable in human annals. Is it to be wondered at that the little discordant note which whispers "the end of the Union" should at this time rise to the general ear in a key so absurdly inopportune, so inexplicably out of harmony with the pursuits and hopes of the day, that upon its first accost no man, not absolutely *glamoured* by the illusions which have begotten this phrenzy in Washington, should be disposed to entertain it for a moment?

Notwithstanding all these motives to treat this rumor lightly, there is sufficient substance in it to raise a most anxious concern. It is undoubtedly true that there is a deep and dangerous discontent inhabiting the bosoms of many citizens—dangerous from the zeal with which they meditate upon plans of redress; still more dangerous from the intelligence, personal influence, private and public virtue of those who are leading the dissatisfied towards an abyss into which this Confederacy may be cast and broken into atoms. The existence of such a state of things furnishes the topic of a solemn invocation to every friend of the Constitution speedily to unite in measures of conciliation and peace.

It is not the dissolution of the Union we have to fear. Not even the most infuriate "zeal to destroy," I venture to predict, will ever obtain that mournful triumph over the good sense of the country. The *piety* (I use this word in its classical sense) of the sons of the Confederacy will, in the worst extreme, protect the parent from this fate. But we have great reason to deprecate any and every struggle to maintain our Union when action is to supersede argument. We may reason in safety as long as the question is open to reason. But it will be a sad day, and the beginning of many days of sorrow to this republic, when the argument is abandoned by temperate men and handed over to the domination of angry disputants. Still more sorrowful when prevention and redress shall have taken the field outside of the pale of argument.

Intrinsically, there is really no great difficulty in the questions which threaten the peace of the country. A "masterly inactivity" would, in fact, in due time, bring all sides to a happy equilibrium. Never was there so portentous an issue suspended upon a quarrel so wretched. It would be the everlasting reproach of history, that one hair of the head of this glorious mother of freedom—the American Union—should be hurt in a strife of such small motives and petty annoyances as the case, in its best phase, presents. Its embarrassments belong to an excited state of feeling, which has unhappily taken possession of the passions of men and complicated its simple and manageable elements with prejudices that may become unmanageable.

Considerate men may very easily define and settle the constitutional powers of Government on the whole subject of slavery. Indeed, those questions are already settled in the Legislative, Judicial, and popular history of the past. The whole ground is covered. These points of constitutional power being once recognised and laid aside in the argument, it is not less easy for wise and cool men to determine how far it is expedient or just to exercise the power which may clearly exist. The inclination of the great mass of the country, both in the free and slave States, would, doubtless, be to acquiesce in, indeed to applaud whatever resolve shall tend to the harmonious and friendly termination of all disputes.

Let us inquire what it is that has disturbed the equanimity of the country, or any portion of it, and begotten a temper of such discordant antagonism.

The slavery question has given rise to three parties in the nation, whose position, it is worth our while, at this time, to review. We have some reminiscences to recall.

A clique, or company, or faction of agitators, scattered over the North and West, but chiefly in the North, originally small in numbers, insignificant but mischievous, some years ago began a system of assault upon the slavery of the South. Many of these men and women—for there were more women than men in their congregations—impelled, or pretending to be impelled, by what they called a conscientious, and even a religious sentiment, very sedulously set themselves to work to stimulate rebellion amongst the slaves in the Southern States, and even took measures to teach them, by emissaries and by the aid of presses devoted to this charitable labor, how to establish and conduct a warfare, whose chief implements were proposed to be the torch and the knife. They were detected in this treason by a search of the post office, and were exposed. Measures were immediately adopted, every where in the South, to prevent the further progress of this diabolical plot. The circulation of papers was stopped. Such emissaries as could be caught within Southern State jurisdictions were severely punished.

Now, this atrocious invasion of the security of domestic life in the slave States was provoked by no act of the South which the most perverse ingenuity could convert into a pretext for it. The mere sin of holding a slave, or, in more proper terms, the culpability of not emancipating, at once, a whole nation of ignorant, helpless, thriftless negroes, and consigning them to certain and indescribable wretchedness, was a sufficient offence, in the view of these fanatics, to authorize them to preach desolation to every fireside south of Mason and Dixon's line.

In the free States these people (the Abolitionists) worked at their meditated purpose in open day, not only unmolested by the authorities, but even unrebuked. In truth, they were wholly disregarded by the communities in which they lived. If an occasional reproof of their worst designs was found in some portions of the Northern press, it was not very emphatic nor very severe. No one, however, who is acquainted with the people of the North can believe, for a moment, that this little school of incendiaries ever found sympathy, support, or fellowship in the opinion of any sober-minded person of that region. The great body of the Northern people—and the same may be said of the West—scarcely noticed them at all; or, if they did notice them, regarded them as crack-brained enthusiasts, whose ignorance, insignificance, and misdirected zeal rendered them mere subjects of ridicule. To bring them into the range of serious public comment, it was thought, would only give them importance; and to attempt to restrain them by law, would but multiply their numbers, enlarge their capacity for mischief, and aggravate their self-consequence as objects of fancied persecution. Northern society has had ample experience in the treatment of those doctrinal eccentricities which have been supposed to impart more than one grotesque feature to the development of mind in that section of the Union. That experience has taught them the policy of leaving all such freaks of opinion to the silent counteraction of their own extravagance.

The abolition phrenzy was not allowed to encounter this trial. If it met no opposition in the region of its birth, it naturally aroused in the slave States a quick and sensitive indignation. Upon this Southern excitement it has been fed and nursed into a growth which, although not formidable, has greatly increased its means of annoyance and irritation. It has lived upon aggression, and redoubled its activity upon every manifestation of pain inflicted upon its adversary.

From being in its origin a fanatical prepossession of the mind of a few zealots, who had wrought themselves into the belief that they were engaged in a work of duty and religion, it was not long before it fell under the notice of demagogues, and was taken into the political field. Bad men, and some of them talented and dexterous men, found in this pernicious sentimentality the means and opportunity for political distinction. To them we owe the embodiment of the fanatics into a political association, and all the perverse dexterity with which they have disturbed the natural, and, we may say, wholesome action of the two great parties of the country. To them we owe this constant agitation of the slave question, the studious zeal with which they have sought for new means of annoyance, the incessant promulgation of new tactics of offence: to them we owe the constant increase of numbers by fresh recruits, and the magnifying of the visible force of their array: to them we owe in great part the strange leagues, the strange domestic quarrels, the reconciliations, the frequent conventions, and the new platforms which have during a few years past imparted something of a comic vivacity to the progression of public events. Abolitionism, which began in the foul dreams of a few morbid *doctrinaires*, is able now to boast in its crusade against slavery the glories of having annexed Texas; of having brought on the Mexican war; of having added California and New Mexico to the Union; and, in these achievements, to have done more for the extension of slavery than the utmost ingenuity of its most effective friends could have hoped to accomplish in a century. It is another of its triumphs that it has done more than ever evil-inclined men did before to put in peril the Union itself, and to sow discord over the surface of a peaceful land.

Demagogues thrive on popular prejudice. The worst man, beyond all comparison, is he who fosters a noxious sentiment in any portion of the people that he may use it for his own preferment. He brings the stimulus of a corrupt personal interest to the labor of seducing his fellow-men from their fealty to peaceful Government, and setting them upon their work of destruction. Through this contest and admixture, abolitionism has risen to be a political monster in the Union, and, under the guidance of false men and hypocritical pleas of conscience, has meditated and contrived the most atrocious crimes.

It was scarcely to be expected that the South would preserve its equanimity under this incessant aggression. Naturally enough, it has been aroused into an indiscriminate distrust of the whole Northern population—even to a sentiment of hostility. With some few exceptions, the people of the Southern States have suffered themselves to be misled into the belief that the schemes of the abolitionists are approved and aided by the entire population of the free States. This mistake is greatly to be deplored, as it is the source of the chief difficulties which belong to the subject. It is a grievous injustice to the North, and calculated to force that section of the Union into an adversary position. Yet it should not surprise any one who reflects upon the incidents which are constantly brought to the notice of Southern men. They see portions of the Northern press descanting with ceaseless assiduity and in a tone of severe comment upon the condition of Southern society. They perceive hostility to the social laws of the South made a standard topic for the discussions of the hustings. They observe Congress continually assailed by offensive petitions and remonstrances having reference to the most delicate concerns connected with their own peace and safety. And, above all, they see State Legislatures becoming the volunteer agents to promote an agitation in which, from first to last, the theme of aggression is treated in terms of actual insult to Southern feeling. In the contemplation of such facts we may readily comprehend how the sensitive mind of the South is lashed into a temper which leaves neither inclination nor ability to weigh the nature of the offence with a steady hand, nor to discriminate between the political agitators who contrive and the people who silently abstain from and disapprove the provocation. Upon this subject the Northern men, both in and out of Congress, owe it to themselves to speak more plainly than they are in the habit of doing, and to disabuse the minds of the people of the South of an opinion which has begotten so much distrust. We know the difficulty which public men have to encounter in reproving even the worst factions within the circle of their connexions, and the compulsion which binds them to silence in the presence of the most inconsiderable fragments of their constituency who may happen to be banded upon some crotchet of public policy—and we can make allowance for the embarrassment this imposes upon them; but, in the present case, a paramount duty would seem to urge, upon every candid and upright representative of a free State district, a faithful exposition of the opinion of those he represents. Although not a Northern man myself, but, on the contrary, one who has never resided in any other than a slave State, I can speak for them, and affirm, from extensive observation of the fact, that throughout the Northern States not one sensible or educated man in ten—I might safely transcend this proportion—not one in ten of those who control opinion, or direct the course of political action, or who, with any effect and visible result, shape the policy of the country, is, in the common meaning of the term, a political abolitionist, or an abolitionist in any sense not entirely compatible with the just and equal administration of the Constitution, and the complete peace and prosperity of the Southern States.

The existence of the feeling which I have described in the South has furnished opportunity for the birth and growth of a party there scarcely less mischievous than the abolition zealots of the North. Demagogues in that section have also taken advantage of the question, and set up, on their side, a system of agitation which is but the counterpart of that of the North. It is a curious fact, that in this war of ultraisms both factions have come to the avowal of the same purpose—a dissolution of the Union—unless the imputed grievance on either side be removed; the abolitionists unless slavery be abolished; their antagonists unless slavery be extended. Thus extremes meet, and by continual reverberation bring themselves under the control of dangerous passions which lead them to concur in the same end.

It is to be regarded as an unfortunate incident belonging to this strife, that this ultra party of the South, as it has grown out of a system of provocation which has given some justification to its existence, receives more or less aid and support from men of the greatest influence in society. Many true men, excellent and worthy, distinguished for intelligence, virtue and patriotism, have allowed themselves—very naturally, we must admit—to become so excited by the assaults to which I have referred, that they not only look complacently on the intemperate proceedings of these headlong factionists, but even, in some cases, catching the ardor of their ungoverned passion, stimulate them to a career which, if it have any success, must whelm the country in anarchy. Surely, wise men, even under a sense of the most intolerable grievance, will not intentionally contribute to promote measures which can only aggravate the grievance tenfold! The country has a right to expect from the leading men of the South—from those whose counsels have in past time swayed the opinion of that region, and whose weight of character and public virtue entitle them to sway it now—that they shall diligently repress all extravagant resolve, and check that constitutional tendency to passionate and extreme conclusions which, unchecked, may, in brief space, become an ungovernable impulse. Much more does the country expect of them a religious abstinence from any and all participation in these reckless fervors.

Such is the character of the two ultra parties which now engross to themselves the agitation of the Union. Between these two, stands the great party of FRIENDS OF THE UNION. It is composed equally of Northern men and Southern men—citizens of the free States and of the slave States—of Whigs and Democrats. We compute it below its strength when we say it equals ninety-nine men out of every hundred. These men *do not intend to see this Union dissolved*. They are not to be led or misled by ultra-politicians, or by any politicians, into a treasonable imagining against our great and glorious Confederacy. They will pray for it, work for it, and, if need be, fight for it. They will not only support the Constitution themselves, but compel all gainsayers to respect and obey it. They have had no meetings for purposes of organization. They need none. They have grown up in the shadow of the Union, and know nothing and can conceive of nothing outside of it. They are the men who handle the business of the country; who plough, and sow, and reap; who work at the anvil, the bench, and the loom; who navigate the sea; who ply all trade and commerce; who fill courts, lecture rooms, and pulpits; who buy and sell, build, plant, and beautify the land; in short, the men who drive the wheels of this vast and wonderful machine of life, liberty, and happiness—our Confederate Republic.

They will not endure much talking of disunion, nor weaving of political sophisms, nor balancing of metaphysical scruples touching the integrity of this circle of States. They are practical; they are prosperous, and very busy in laying the foundations for still greater prosperity. They are proud of the glory of the country, its old associations of colonial history, its war of independence, its Constitution and Union, and they do not mean to see these obliterated by the quips and quillets of supersubtle logicians. They are neither office-holders, nor office-seekers, nor expectants of office: they ask nothing and want nothing but the liberty to go on working together, as they have always done in past time; and that liberty assuredly they will have, let the orators and abstraction-mongers say what they may. Ambitious men may plot, and passionate men may fume, and the micromegas of the villages may work up the loungers of a tavern-porch into a tempest of maudlin wrath for the nullification of Wilmot provisos; but a mighty nation will not be jostled out of its career by such small flies upon the wheel as these.

So we stand. Ultraists on the North: ultraists on the South: between them, the great Constitutional Union Party. Ninety-nine to one against all disturbers. That party has one cardinal paramount principle and duty—THE PRESERVATION OF THE UNION AT ALL HAZARDS. Upon every other question it may have various opinions. Its members may differ on the question of the Territories, on the question of the admission of California, and, still more, on the great question of the value of slavery; but they will insist that, whatever difference of opinion may exist, and whatever interests such differences may affect, the questions shall be decided in the constitutional way, and *within the Union*. They will abide by law, and will not abide by revolution. They want no Nashville Convention, either to teach them what are their rights or how to maintain them. We have better tribunals than conclaves of hot-brained politicians or revolutionary conventions. There is a better guide in each man's heart to teach him his duty to the country at this crisis, than all the stump orators from Passamaquoddy to Sacramento.

What is there in these engrossing topics of the day that the friends of the Union may not calmly discuss and reasonably settle? Why is it that every question is not amenable to the tribunal of fair and equitable judgment? Are the wise men of this nation, the grave and thoughtful leaders of the country, willing to confess that they have been so driven from their balance, so distempered in the composure of their minds by the stings of a few malignant fanatics, that they can no longer think rightly nor act dispassionately in matters of the deepest concern to this people and their posterity? Let them dismiss all sense of annoyance, and vindicate their patriotism, now brought into question, by temperate and wise conference on all points of difference. We are in the habit of boasting, this

> "The land where, girt by friend or foe,
> "A man may speak the thing he will."

Let us make it something more than a boast, and speak honestly one to another.

I profess myself to belong to the Union party. I am for the Union *in whatever contingency*. My nativity and my dwelling place are both in a Southern clime, and I am interlaced by a thousand ties of affection with the Southern population. I have no ill will; but, on the contrary, strong admiration for the North and its beautifully-developed social system. I exult in the growth and vigor and glory of the marvellous West. If I am to live to see a struggle to keep these three together, I shall be in the first and in the last array of those who shall still work and hope for the Union. Now, having made this declaration, let me add, that I have ever held the Wilmot proviso, from the first day it was brought to light to the present, to be *a mere contrivance of mischief*. It never had integrity enough in it to entitle it to the smallest modicum of respect from Congress or the country. It was a vile clap-trap, devised for a vile political use. It has grown to be a bugbear; it will end with a universal confession that it is, and was from the first, a humbug. The progress or destiny of slavery—which it professed to arrest and circumscribe—has never been, and cannot be, under the constitution and social organization of this country, to any perceptible extent, controlled by such legislation, or indeed by any Federal legislation. Nor is it subject to the control of any organized merely philanthropic agency. Slavery in the United States was an accident, and fell within the scope of commercial interest. It has subsisted, ever since its introduction, upon inducements of interest. It will finally disappear, through the influence of the same inducements, and through no other visible or practical agency. Federal legislation will never abolish it, nor increase it; it will go, under our system, wherever it is wanted. Where it is not wanted, no device of statesmanship will ever carry it. Every one seems to overlook the fact that extension of the area of slavery is neither the increase nor the perpetuation of slavery. If we *could* people New Mexico and California with slaves, (which never can be done,) we should *dispeople*, to the same extent, Maryland and Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri, and have placed the slave in regions where emancipation would be certain and speedy. The whole history of slavery is full of demonstration of these principles. Nothing is more groundless than the idea of the slave population becoming too numerous within the territory of the States that now allow it. These States have eight hundred thousand square miles and more. Ten slaves to the square mile would make eight millions. Fifty to the square mile would give forty millions. No one who observes the progress of slavery can believe that the United States will ever exhibit an aggregate of one-fourth of this number, let them be placed where they may. If these views be true, of what import is the Wilmot proviso? Suppose the whole United States were opened to slavery, and Great Britain besides, can any one believe that a slave peasantry—I mean a population of slaves to do the work of a country—would or could be introduced into either of them? Some family servants might be introduced; and, so far as this class of persons was concerned, there would be nothing in their condition to be deplored; but of a working population none could exist in the presence of the competition of white labor. Whilst, on the other hand, the attempt to dismiss slave labor by a sudden or premature disruption, in the regions where it is profitable and congenial, would be not less disastrous to the black population than it would be to the white. There is abundant illustration of this in the recent history of slavery on this continent. To a certain extent, therefore, the relationship of slavery to society is founded upon principles which legislation cannot violate with impunity. It may very safely be left to the operation of these principles. Nothing is more certainly true than that the instinct or characteristic tendencies of Anglo-Saxon association is adverse to a perpetuity of slave institutions. Slavery can only thrive in that association whilst society is in its earlier stages of growth, and occupies a territorial space greatly larger than its actual population requires; in other words, whilst it is unprovided with a sufficient stock of white labor. It has been computed by men of shrewd and philosophic observation, that slavery cannot maintain itself in any region of the United States favorable to free labor, when the population of such region has arrived at fifty to the square mile. From that stage of population slavery necessarily begins to dwindle, and finally disappears. This is the experience of the States which have already disburdened themselves of it; and the influence of this fact is visible in those States which are approaching that stage of population. No mere philanthropy, therefore, no agency springing out of an impulsive sentimentality, will ever accomplish any thing towards the extirpation of slavery. They will accomplish little more than the engendering of discontent amongst the slaves and, to that extent, embittering the hardships of servitude. Nor has Christianity any direct action upon it through the instrumentality of legislative statutes. That benign institute, always wisely abstaining from interference with the decrees of the lawgiver, much more potently assails the evils of human condition by the silent infusion of its spirit into the breasts of those who conduct the affairs of any generation. Whatsoever institution works oppression, finds its first reform and its gradual abolition in that spirit of Christianity which corrects the heart and enlightens the understanding; a spirit that neither importunes the Legislature, nor violently assails the peace and brotherhood of society. It instructs through precepts, not through laws, and lifts society into a condition with which inhumanity, injustice, and oppression are incompatible. The reformer of any age, and more particularly of this age of enlightenment, may confidently abide the influence of these motives, and much more surely hope to see a good consummation resulting from them than from any harsh and exasperating system of agitation.

Providence seems to have supplied us with, at once, the most powerful and the safest impulses for the disposal of slavery, in the incentives of personal interest. In that interest slavery originated, and we may say, without offending the prejudices of any one, that, as it respects the African, it has conferred upon him a blessing not meditated by man. It brought him forth from the most brutal barbarism known to the human race and transplanted him into the realms of civilization, where he has become whatsoever he is in elevation above the bestial condition in which he originally lived. His fate, in this respect, we may affirm, has been directed by an inscrutable Providence, which has decreed no small good to him in the midst of all his wrongs. The same impulse of interest, apparently under a like guidance, is conducting his posterity towards a final emancipation, which, we may readily believe, from what we see around us, is, at last, to restore him, a civilized and christianized man, back to that shore from which his ancestor was dragged in irons and shedding the bitterest tears. Another century may witness him on that shore, a free, prosperous, and happy citizen of an enlightened Republic.

If we look at the history of slavery in our own States, we shall find some strange and instructive facts. In the period immediately preceding the Revolution, we may see Massachusetts complaining against Parliament for restraining the West India trade in lumber and fish; the point of the complaint being that the interdict deprived her of the usual supply of molasses out of which she manufactured rum, the indispensable commodity by which she sustained her traffic in African slaves. At the same date we shall find Virginia lifting up her voice against the same Parliament, for allowing and encouraging the importation of African slaves into her domain, to the manifest injury of her population and the discouragement of the immigration of white laborers. On either side, the question was one of mere interest, unmixed with any sentiment of philanthropy. This is a lesson from history; and, looking at the changes which have since occurred, it may teach us to understand what a century may bring forth. It may also, perhaps, abate somewhat the distrust of those who seem impatient to forestall the decisions of time and the decrees of Heaven.

But, to come to the more immediate question of the day: What is there in the debate of the present time to excite, amongst fair and candid men, the exacerbation which seems to have been produced by the proposition to forbid slavery in any territory belonging to the nation?—either to forbid or allow it. May not men honestly differ in opinion on this subject, both as to the constitutionality and expediency of either proposition, without endangering the existence of our Union?

One would think the first question would be, (supposing that any legislation of the Federal Government could plant or uproot slavery, which, for reasons I have hinted at, I do not believe,) is slavery *a good* or *an evil* to the community to which it is given? If it be a good, then, by all means, confer it where you can. If an evil, what excuse can any State of the Union give—free or slave—for inflicting it upon a new population—for incorporating it in a new society? Is not that question, good or evil, an open question to the discussion of every citizen in the land? Is there a slaveholder in this Confederacy, or the inhabitant of a slave State, who, believing social slavery to be a curse or an evil thing, could maintain himself before the world as a wise or a just statesman, whilst he persuades and insists upon, and, by all means in his power, contrives the infliction of this curse or evil upon any brotherhood or dependency of his fellow citizens in any new or remote section of the National domain? There can be but one answer to this question consistent with the good sense of him to whom it is addressed. And again—why should we suppose that this question, of the good or evil of slavery, a point of debate only between North and South? Is it not a question which every where raises conflicting opinions in the South itself? Might it not, indeed, have been safely left, by the whole North, to the discussion it would have received in the whole South? Slavery is better understood in the South, and its advantages and disadvantages, whatever they are, are more astutely observed, and more judiciously treated there, than they can be in the North. There was a time when the South would have very calmly and wisely adjusted the question of slavery or no slavery in the Territories. They did so in 1787, and so in 1820, and many times between these dates, and later still, have exercised control over the subject. They are manifestly not so calm and deliberative now. The change in their temper on this point is one of the accursed fruits of the fanatical abolitionism of the North to which I have alluded. But for the conscience-impelled cliques, but for the incendiary societies, but for the denunciatory presses, but for the stump orations of abolitionism, but for the taunting, insulting, inflammatory resolves of State Legislatures, and the incessant pouring down of wrathful and malignant petitions, emancipation would before this day have done much effective work in some of the States; slaves would have been spared many unpleasant restraints; and the whole South would have been a trusty and considerate arbiter of these very disputes touching the Territories.

I can appeal to some high authorities on this point, and perhaps the citation of them may serve yet to restore both parties to some measure of wholesome equanimity amidst our present distractions. I think, if the fact were investigated, it would turn out that, setting aside the excitement and its effects, there have been, and perhaps are now, in the Southern States, as large a number of persons who honestly and soberly believe slavery an evil, as there are of the opposite opinion—many more than those who think it a positive good. If such be the actual state of the Southern mind, the disclosure of it cannot but take off much of the edge of that asperity which is supposed just now to threaten the existence of the Union. For certainly the reasonable men of the South will not consent to see the Union subverted because a large portion of the country, even though it be geographically separate from themselves, is disposed, under some *mis*interpretation (as the South may conceive it) of the power of Congress, to affirm by legislation what their own most cherished and virtuous citizens affirm without legislation. I must repeat, to avoid being misunderstood, that I am myself fully persuaded that all legislation on the subject must be futile. Others think otherwise, and, supposing they are right, I address my remarks to their view of the case.

In the pursuit of my object, it is not my purpose to say any thing on the constitutional questions which have been raised—the power to prohibit, or establish, or regulate slavery in the Territories. I abandon all constitutional arguments in despair, and eschew them as the most variable of worldly things. They are more changeful than the tide—more uncertain than the wind. I only know that the power has been exercised from the beginning down to this day. In that I abide. Somebody must be right; and, for want of better guidance, I go, for the present, with the Founders of the Constitution, and more than a half century of their successors. Sixty years' practice satisfies me. Besides, is it not now an established canon of constitutional law that when there is a *will* there is always a *way?* Do we not know that high and authoritative practice has settled the point that, whatever is deemed desirable or necessary to be done by a party in the majority, may always be done under some power, expressed or implied, or interpreted to be expressed and implied? and that what is deemed necessary to be prevented may be prevented by *denying* what is expressed or implied. And is there not, also, this new invention of "*salus populi*" to patch the Constitution wherever its texture is too thin? I trust to these and other authorities, and so dismiss all concern on this head. I do not want to perplex my subject with these constitutional subtleties, which have become the tactics of the day. We know the South well enough to believe that if they had adopted the opinion that slavery was a great evil to the Territories, and had found motive to bring the restriction or prohibition of it within the scope of their policy, they would have had no great difficulty with the logic of the matter to demonstrate the constitutional power. I say this with all deference and respect to the integrity of the South. Their habits of analysis and synthesis is an idiosyncrasy. We remember that Mr. Jefferson, and all his compatriots who acted with him, held that there was no power to annex Louisiana; that the purchase was unconstitutional. But ever since that act was done we have recognised the right of annexation as fundamental law, and have accordingly annexed territory whenever it has been found convenient. We consider the constitutional power settled. Where, then, is the offence now, in the large numbers of the American people who consider this question relating to the regulation, the prohibition, or allowance of slavery in the Territories, as also settled? I mean, what fair ground of quarrel is there against a majority of the people of the United States (supposing there be a majority) for adhering to the precedents of sixty years, and believing that Congress may act and ought to act in this matter as it thinks most expedient? What such weighty motive for quarrel in this fact, as to set men to contriving plans of severance of the States and dissolution of the Union? Do not such threats come with an especial bad grace from those who maintain the constitutional power touching the kindred question of annexation, which has not truly the support of precedent, and confessedly less from the letter of the Constitution?

I recur, then, to my purpose of showing some notable facts, in the way of demonstration of Southern opinion on this very question of slavery. I may affirm, as matter of historical memory, that the Southern States—antecedent to that period when, annoyed and maddened by the incessant provocations of the Northern abolitionists, their opinions were driven into their present extremes—that nearly every Southern State, perhaps all, regarded slavery "as a social and political evil" which had been forced upon them in a previous age, and which, being irremediable by any speedy and practical policy, was to be dealt with according to its nature and the circumstances in which it was found. It was felt to be a delicate subject and required delicate management. It was universally admitted to be a subject exclusively under State control; and a proper and commendable jealousy was exhibited against all attempts to interfere with it by the Federal Government. It was affirmed then, as now, that it was recognised and protected by the Constitution of the United States, and was by no means to be invaded by them. These opinions were maintained with acute sensitiveness, and the whole country, North and South, heartily concurred in them. But still slavery was acknowledged to be a misfortune, a great evil in the social body. It is only of late years that any Southern man has proclaimed it to be "a blessing." If any one so thought of it, in old time, it was not made known to the world.

I happen to have at hand some authentic manifestations of this fact, of comparatively recent date, from which I propose to cite some fragments. My reader is, perhaps, prepared to anticipate my reference to the debate in the House of Delegates of Virginia in the winter of 1832. I propose to refer to a few passages in that debate, because Virginia may be considered an authoritative exponent of Southern feeling then, as she is now.

A proposition was introduced into that House in January of the year referred to, to instruct a select committee "to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the vote of the qualified voters of the several towns, boroughs, cities, and counties of the commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law that the children of all female slaves who might be born in the State after the fourth of July, 1840, should become the property of the Commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty-one years, the females at the age of eighteen, if detained by their owners within the limits of Virginia until they should have respectively arrived at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom should be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal beyond the limits of the United States."

This proposition was introduced by Mr. RANDOLPH. There were other propositions of the same character introduced during the session.

These grave questions gave rise to a general debate, which was distinguished by great ability, and was replete with evidences of the sober thought and settled convictions of the speakers. The policy of the measure was controverted and sustained with conspicuous animation and eloquence. The proposition was finally rejected by a small majority. A few passages, extracted from some of the speeches on this occasion, will answer all the ends I propose by a reference to this debate.

Mr. BOLLING, of Buckingham, said:

"This is a grave and important subject; one that ought to be, and will be, considered. Its importance demands that it should be considered and debated here; and is not, as some gentlemen think, a reason that it should be passed in silence, and acted upon in secret. No, sir, our action should be calm and dispassionate, but open, bold, and manly. Sir, that it is an evil, a great and appalling evil, he dared believe no sane man would or could deny. Nor, sir, can it be denied that it deprives us of many of those advantages, facilities, and blessings which we should enjoy had we a more dense white population. That it is a blighting, withering curse upon this land, is clearly demonstrated by this very discussion itself.

"Notwithstanding Eastern gentlemen had waxed so warm, there are many, very many in eastern Virginia who had rather resign their slaves gratuitously than submit to the ills of slavery; many who had rather turn them loose and leave them behind while they should seek a happier clime—a land alike a stranger to slaves and slavery."

Mr. MARSHALL, of Fauquier, said:

"The utmost latitude of debate had already been tolerated, and no injury could now accrue from a temperate expression of his sentiments on the general question. He felt himself at liberty to say that he was opposed to slavery as a practical evil. He objected to slavery, not because it implies moral turpitude, or because it is a sin to be the owner of a slave. If it be a sin, let it fall on those who introduced the evil and have transmitted it to their offspring. * * Wherefore, then, object to slavery? Because it is ruinous to the whites, retards improvement, roots out an industrious population, banishes the yeomanry of the country, deprives the spinner, the weaver, the smith, the shoemaker, the carpenter, of employment and support. Our towns are stationary, our villages almost every where declining, and the general aspect of the country marks the curse of a wasteful, idle, reckless population, who have no interest in the soil, and care not how much it is impoverished."

Mr. CHANDLER, of Norfolk:

"I took occasion to observe that I believed the people of Norfolk county would rejoice, could they, even in the vista of time, see some scheme for the gradual removal of this curse from our land. I was desirous to see a report from the committee declaring the slave population an evil, and recommending to the people of this Commonwealth the adoption of some plan for its riddance."

Mr. BERRY, of Jefferson:

"Sir, I believe that no cancer on the physical body was ever more certain, steady, and fatal in its progress than is this cancer on the political body of the State of Virginia. I admit that we are not to be blamed for the origin of this evil among us; we are not to be blamed for its existence now, but we shall deserve the severest censure if we do not take measures, as soon as possible, to remove it."

Mr. FAULKNER, of Berkeley:

"Sir, there is one point in which I do most sincerely agree with those who are arrayed against me in this discussion. It is that the proposed inquiry is one of great delicacy and transcendent importance. The revolution which agitated this Commonwealth fifty years ago, great and important as it was, involved in its results but a change of our political relations with the mother country. This measure, should it prove successful—and that it must, sooner or later, no individual in this House can now reasonably doubt—must involve in its consequences a moral, physical, and political revolution in this State; a revolution which will be beneficially felt by every great interest in the Commonwealth, and by every slaveholding State upon this continent. I shall ever reckon it amongst the proudest incidents of my life that I have contributed my feeble aid to forward a revolution so grand and patriotic in its results. The idea of a gradual emancipation and removal of the slaves from this Commonwealth is coeval with the declaration of your independence of the British yoke. It sprung into existence during the first session of the General Assembly subsequent to the formation of your Republican Government. It was proper; there was a fitness of things in the fact that so beneficent an object as the plan for the gradual extinction of slavery in this State should have been the twin offspring of that mind which gave birth to the bill of rights and to the act for religious freedom. A fact so honorable to the public spirit and humanity of that age, so worthy of the genius and expanded philanthropy of those with whom it originated, cannot be too often recurred to, nor too proudly cherished. Slavery, it is admitted, is an evil. It is an institution which presses heavily against the best interests of the State. Being thus injurious, have we not a right to demand its extermination?"

Mr. MCDOWELL, of Rockbridge:

"We know that the blessings of our position and soil and climate are countervailed by the apathy of our public counsels, and by our exclusive reliance upon involuntary labor. Our interests and senses proclaim the progress of general decline; conscience and experience attest that slavery is its principal cause. Do we not contemplate Virginia justly when we regard her as meagre, haggard, and enfeebled, with decrepitude stealing upon her limbs, as given over to leanness and impotency, and as wasting away under the improvidence and the inactivity which eternally accompany the fatal institution that she cherishes, and cherishes, too, as a mother who will hazard her own life rather than part even with the monstrous offspring that afflicts her? If I am to judge from the tone of our debate, and from the concessions on all hands expressed, there is not a man in this body, not one perhaps that is even represented here, who would not have thanked the generations that have gone before us, if, acting as public men, they had brought this bondage to a close; who would not have thanked them, if acting as private men, on private motives, they had relinquished the property which their mistaken kindness has